Rep. Spreitzer opposes dismantling of GAB

MADISON – Today, Rep. Mark Spreitzer (D-Beloit) spoke out strongly against a Republican bill to dismantle the non-partisan Government Accountability Board (GAB) and replace it with two partisan commissions. The GAB was created in 2007 to avoid partisan corruption following the caucus scandals of the early 2000s. Although some of the bill's provisions, and the resulting Republican spin, make a clever head fake towards bipartisanship, the bill is anything but.

"The non-partisan Government Accountability Board is held out as a national model for impartial election administration," Rep. Spreitzer said. "Unfortunately, my Republican colleagues have decided that winning elections and evading accountability matters more than clean, ethical government. Rather than change questionable practices that led to investigations, they decided to change the rules."

The bill replaces non-partisan retired judges with partisan appointees. At best the new Ethics and Elections Commissions this bill creates would be toothless, deadlocked between partisan members. At worst, the majority party could selectively enforce rules against opponents, while insulating itself from any scrutiny.

The bill also lowers the bar for Senate approval of commissioners. Only the votes of the majority party are required, throwing out the current procedure that requires a supermajority and thus at least some support from the minority party.

"Following attempts to roll back open record laws and exempt politicians from investigation for political crimes, this proposal is one more in a series of Republican efforts to make politicians less accountable for their actions," Spreitzer said. "As Wisconsin residents find themselves trapped in a time of hyper polarization, this proposal will only intensify the problem. If our elections are run by commissioners who support one party over the other, Wisconsin only stands to lose."

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